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Written Testimony of
Ray Rossomando
Connecticut Education Association
Before the Education Committee

SB 364 AAC Special Education Funding

**HB 5335 AAC The Alignment of The Coordinated State-Wide Reading Plan With The
State's Two-Generational Initiative**

**SB 361 AAC Interdistrict Cooperation and The Reporting Requirements of Cooperative
Arrangements**

March 8, 2018

Good afternoon, Senators Slossberg and Boucher, Representatives Fleischmann and Lavielle, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Ray Rossomando, and I am the Director of Policy, Research, and Government Relations for the Connecticut Education Association (CEA). CEA represents active and retired public school teachers from over 150 school districts across the state.

CEA supports SB 364.

Increasing the state share of local special education costs has long been a goal shared by virtually everyone in the legislature. The United States is unique in its mission and commitment to provide every child an opportunity to receive a public education. This sets our schools apart from many others in the world, as our teachers, classrooms, and schools continually evolve to meet the needs of ALL students. CEA shares the goals sought through the federal government's promise to ensure that children with special needs will have access to educational opportunity. Nevertheless, this promise comes with a cost that was handed down by the federal government decades ago as an unfunded mandate.

CEA believes that states are far better positioned than local school districts to meet the fiscal demands of this mandate. Reducing the threshold that triggers a state share in local special education expenditures moves the state toward a more appropriate share.

CEA is also aware of a bill under consideration in the Insurance and Real Estate Committee (SB 199) that seeks to reallocate special education funding without any increase in the state's commitment and in a way that shifts ECS funds from towns most in need. CEA is concerned that schemes like the one in SB 199 that would turn special education into a "captive insurance"

market should be considered with great caution and scrutiny. Should such schemes reach this committee, which is highly likely given your jurisdiction, we urge their rejection.

CEA supports HB 5335.

CEA advocates for programs that address the building of literacy skills throughout communities and among learners of all ages.

CEA believes that student learning is driven by the experiences children encounter in their homes and communities. We continue to advocate for strategies that enhance these experiences, such as those that promote comprehensive community schools or expand the positive reach of family resource centers. To this end, CEA has supported implementation of Two-Generation programs through the state's successful family resource center system.

The strategy proposed in HB 5335 would address community and adult literacy – the condition of which is critical to the educational success of schoolchildren. It recognizes that parents and children benefit from opportunities that can lift their skills together. We urge the committee's support.

CEA is concerned about SB 361 and is unable to support this bill.

Section 1 of SB 361 permits local Boards of Education to outsource their administrative services to Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs). The bill specifically references the management of special education staff, and leaves open the door to "other services." CEA is concerned about the legal relationship between teachers, who are employees under contract with the local board of education, and a third-party that would have management authority over contracted employees.

Section 3 of SB 361 addresses cooperative arrangements between two or more boards of education. Under existing law, such cooperative arrangements can serve as a third-party entity capable of, for example, employing teachers and receiving school building grants. The bill proposes a change that would permit a board of education to book the total expenditures of such entity (i.e., the cooperative arrangement) toward the expenditures of each local board of education. As written, the bill appears to permit a local board of education to book the contributions of all local boards to the cooperative as local board expenditures. This may have the effect of a local board being able to count the contributions of other boards into the cooperative toward its MBR. If this is not the intent of this section, CEA suggests language clarifying this. If counting other boards' expenditures toward another town's MBR is the intent, then CEA opposes this provision.

Thank you.
